India's participation in G-7 Meeting

†2532. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether G-7 countries invited India to the meeting held in the month of February;

(b) if so, whether India participated in the meeting and the long term benefits involved therein; and

(c) the countries other than India which were invited to this meeting and the attitude of G-7 countries towards them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) At the invitation of the Chancellor for Exchequer of the United Kingdom, Finance Minister, Shri R Chidambaram attended a breakfast meeting with G-7 Finance Ministers on February 5, 2005. The Summit meeting of Heads of State/Government of G-7 countries will, however, take place on July 6-8, 2005 in Scotland, UK.

(b) and (c) There was no formal agenda. The discussions focused around challenges and opportunities of globalization. Finance Minister briefed others on Indian economy and discussed various issues relating to the international economic situation, including the impact of rising international oil prices. Other countries invited to the meeting were Brazil, South Africa and China.

Pendency of passport applications in Andhra Pradesh

2533. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken efforts to speed up the issuance of passports;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the number of passport applications pending in Passport Offices of Andhra Pradesh, since 2004?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Government have taken

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

various steps to speed up the issuance of passports in the Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh which include (i) due care is taken at the stage of submission of application forms to avoid objections at a later stage (ii) regular interaction with the police authorities to speed up police verification reports (iii) manning of Facilitation Counter by dedicated staff to attend to the grievances of passport applicants and (iv) opening of District Passport Cells in various districts in the State.

(c) The number of passport applications pending in the two Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh since 2004 is 4548.

Intelligence Unit to counter terrorism

2534. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Pentagon has created battle-field intelligence units assigned to work with special operations forces on secret counter terrorism missions;

(b) if so, the benefits India is likely to get out of it;

(c) whether India will participate in the formation of the mission; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) U.S. Department of Defence, through a news release on January 23,2005, denied the existence of any unit directly reportable to the U.S. Secretary of Defence for clandestine operations, as was described in one of the American newspapers, the Washington Post.

(b) to (d) Not applicable.

Agreements with Slovakia

2535. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed three key agreements on wide range interests with Slovakia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and